

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 19191 311511Z

54

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 IO-10 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

NIC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

INRE-00 /078 W

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5806

INFO AMCONSUL LEINGRAD

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 19191

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, UR, SY, IZ

SUBJ: POSTPONEMENT OF BREZHNEV'S MIDDLE EAST VISIT

REF: A. STATE 283489; B. MOSCOW 15894

1. THE JOINT SOVIET-EGYPTIAN STATEMENT ISSUED TO ACCOMPANY
THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT BREZHNEV'S ME TOUR HAS BEEN
POSTPONED (ALL MAJOR MORNING DAILIES AND TASS ENGLISH
WIRE DECEMBER 31) STRONGLY SUGGESTS THAT DIFFERENCES
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 19191 311511Z

OVER THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AND OVER THE APPROACH TO THE

NEXT STAGES IN A ME PEACE SETTLEMENT HAVE PLAYED A MAJOR
ROLE IN THE DECISION TO DELAY THE SOVIET-EGYPTIAN SUMMIT.

2. COMPARISON OF THE JOINT STATEMENT WITH THAT
ISSUED FOLLOWING FAHMY'S VISIT HERE LAST OCTOBER SEEMS
TO SUGGEST THAT THE EGYPTIANS HAVE NOT MADE CONCESSIONS TO
THE SOVIETS IN THIS REGARD, AND HAVE STUCK BY THEIR GUNS
IN REFUSING TO ACCEPT THE MEPC AS THE ONLY VENUE FOR
DISCUSSING THE ME CRISIS OR ACTING TO ACHIEVE ITS
SETTLEMENT.

3. MAJOR POINTS IN THE PRESENT STATEMENT ARE:
A. THE USSR AND EGYPT CONSIDER THAT THE MEPC IS "AN
APPROPRIATE (PODKHODYASHCHIY) FORUM TO REVIEW ALL ASPECTS
OF A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT AND TO TAKE SUITABLE
DECISIONS LEADING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JUST AND
STABLE PEACE IN THE REGION." THE ANALOGOUS LANGUAGE IN
OCTOBER REFERRED TO A ME POLITICAL SETTLEMENT "WHICH SHOULD
BE (DOLZHNO BYT') REALIZED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE
GENEVA CONFERENCE." THE LANGUAGE OF THE PRESENT STATEMENT
THUS APPEARS TO REJECT THE IDEA THAT THE MEPC HAS TO BE
THE ONLY VENUE FOR THE NEXT STAGES OF A SETTLEMENT AND LEAVES
OPEN THE OPTION OF OTHER FORUMS FOR ACHIEVING FURTHER
PROGRESS.

B. ON THE TIMING OF AN APPROACH TO GENEVA, THE STATEMENT
APPEARS TO GO marginally further than did the OCTOBER
STATEMENT TOWARD PLEDGING THE EGYPTIANS TO WORK ACTIVELY
FOR GETTING THE MEPC BACK TO WORK. IT SAYS THAT THE USSR
AND EGYPT "FIRMLY COME OUT FOR THE FACT THAT THE MEPC SHOULD
RENEW ITS WORK IN THE NEAREST FUTURE" WITH ALL INTERESTED
PARTIES PARTICIPATING INCLUDING THE PLO. IT SAYS THAT THE
PARTIES WILL "TAKE ALL MEASURES (PRILAGAT' VSEYU USILIY)
IN THIS DIRECTION." THE PARTIES ALSO EXPRESS UNANIMITY
IN THE VIEW THAT THE "EARLIEST RENEWAL OF THE CONFERENCE'S
WORK WILL HAVE IMPORTANT POSITIVE MEANING" FOR ACHIEVING
A JUST ME PEACE. IN OCTOBER THEY AGREED ONLY TO WORK FOR
(DOBIVAT'SYA) THE RENEWAL OF THE MEPC IN THE NEAREST
FUTURE.

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 19191 311511Z

4. SOVIET PRESS HAS ATTEMPTED TO PLAY DOWN THE IMPORTANCE
OF THE BREZHNEV VISIT'S POSTPONEMENT BY PROMINENTLY
REPORTING THE "FRIENDLY" ATMOSPHERE OF SOVIET-EGYPTIAN
TALKS, OFFERING DIRECT EXPRESSIONS OF SOVIET FRIENDSHIP
FOR THE ARABS, AND REPLAYING ARAB REPORTS IN PRAISE OF
SOVIET-ARAB SOLIDARITY. THE MORNING PAPERS (DECEMBER 31)
FOLLOW UP EARLIER REPORTS OF FRIENDLY MEETINGS BETWEEN THE
EGYPTIAN MINISTERS AND THEIR SOVIET COUNTERPARTS WITH

ARTICLES ON THE TALKS BETWEEN FAHMY AND GROMYKO AND BETWEEN GAMASY AND GRECHKO. THE PRESS ALSO REPORTS THAT THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR HOSTED A DINNER ATTENDED BY GROMYKO AND GRECHKO DECEMBER 30. ALL MEETINGS ARE DESCRIBED AS TAKING PLACE IN A FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE, AND RED STAR AND SOVYETSKAYA ROSSIYA DOCUMENT THE ATMOSPHERICS WITH PHOTOS OF THE PARTICIPANTS WEARING BROAD SMILES. HOWEVER, THE PRESS HAS GIVEN NO HINT ABOUT WHAT THE PARTICIPANTS HAVE SAID, AND UNTYPICALLY HAS EVEN FAILED TO OFFER A SUMMARY OF THE TOASTS EXCHANGED AT GROMYKO'S LUNCHEON (PRAVDA DECEMBER 29) AND AT THE EGYPTIAN EMBASSY.

5. ON THE GENERAL STATE OF SOVIET-ARAB RELATIONS, PRAVDA (DECEMBER 31) CARRIES A LONG REPLAY OF AN ARTICLE WHICH APPEARED IN EGYPTIAN PAPER AL MASA PRASING SOVIET-EGYPTIAN SOLIDARITY. IN SAME VEIN TASS COMMENTATOR YURIY KORNILOV (TASS ENGLISH WIRE DECEMBER 30) ASSERTS THAT THE USSR REMAINS LOYAL FRINED OF THE ARABS AND CASTIGATES WESTERN PRESS SPECULATION ABOUT SOVIET-EGYPTIAN TENSIONS.

6. FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, EGYPTIAN NEWSMEN HERE ARE ATTEMPTING TO LEAVE IMPRESSION WITH THEIR WESTERN COLLEAGUES THAT POSTPONEMENT OF VISIT WAS DUE TO BREZHNEV'S POOR HEALTH. FACT THAT BREZHNEV MET FOR ONLY HALF HOUR WITH FAHMY AND GAMASY AND THAT MEETING TOOK PLACE ON OUTSKIRTS OF MOSCOW ARE CITED IN SUPPORT OF THIS LINE OF REASONING.

7. COMMENT: THE LIMITED INFORMATION AVAILABLE (WE HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO CONTACT THE EGYPTIANS HERE) LEADS US TO TENTATIVE CONCLUSION THAT THE EGYPTIAN REFUSAL TO ABANDON THE STEP-BY-STEP OPTION IN PURSUING A ME SETTLEMENT IS PROBABLY BEHIND BREZHNEV'S POSTPONEMENT OF CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 MOSCOW 19191 311511Z

THE ME TOUR (REFTEL A). WE SUSPECT THAT THE POSTPONEMENT REFLECTS SOVIET DISPLEASURE WITH EGYPT'S REFUSAL TO TAKE MOSCOW'S INTERESTS INTO ACCOUNT REGARDING GENEVA AND WITH CAIRO'S UNWILLINGNESS TO TAKE THOSE "CONCRETE STEPS" TO WHICH GROMYKO REFERRED DURING HIS OCTOBER TALKS WITH FAHMY (REFTEL B). BY TAKING THE ALMOST UNPRECEDENTED STEP OF POSTPONING BREZHNEV'S TRIP SINE DIE FOLLOWING A LENGTHY BUILDUP OF SUPPORT FOR IT IN THE SOVIET PRESS, THE SOVIETS HAVE SEEMINGLY MADE IT CELAR TO SADAT THAT THEIR PRICE FOR A SUMMIT HAS NOT YET BEEN MET. THEY HAVE ALSO SHOWN IN THE STARKEST TERMS THAT EGYPT CANNOT COUNT ON FORCING THE SOVIET HAND. IN POSTPONING (RATHER THAN CANCELLING) THE VISIT MOSCOW NONETHELESS HAS LEFT THE OFFER OF A SUMMIT AND OF IMPORVED RELATIONS OPEN WHILE

ATTEMPTING TO SADDLE SADAT WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR
MAKING PROGRESS.

8. I HAVE APPOINTMENT FRIDAY AFTERNOON WITH SYTENKO, HEAD
OF MIDDLE EAST DIVISION, MFA, WHO WILL HOPEFULLY SHED SOME
LIGHT ON THIS SUBJECT.
STOESSEL

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